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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: July 29, 1969

SUBJECT: Soviet Indicates Acceptance of US ABM Development

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Vladimir Trifonov, Second Secretary,
Political Section, Soviet Embassy
Mr. John D. Hemenway, Chief, Berlin Section,
EUR/GER, Department of State

PLACE: Farewell Reception for Mr. Mikhailov, USSR Embassy

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During an exchange of pleasantries, Mr. Trifonov said that he was taking over Valerian Mikhailov's duties with respect to US/Soviet relations.

Trifonov raised the subject of the SALT talks and asked whether I believed there would be any progress in the near future. I replied that it was clear that many persons believed that disarmament progress was possible. I expressed my belief that, despite noisy opposition, Mr. Nixon's ABM policy ultimately would be fully supported in the Senate and throughout the nation. I asked Trifonov what role he thought the US ABM issue would play in the SALT talks.

EUR/GER: JDHemenway:ljs
(Drafting Office and Officer)

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Trifonov did not believe US development of an ABM would have any effect on the SALT talks either in timing or in their substance. He believed that the US ABM issue was closely related to internal US politics by persons sparring for advantage in the political arena.

Responding to my inquiry, Trifonov acknowledged that the Soviets had an ABM System which was, after all, a defensive weapon. Trifonov said that he certainly expected his countrymen who were charged with defending the Soviet Union to do a good job in the ABM field. Since ABM is essentially a defensive weapon its possession by the US, in Trifonov's opinion, was not significant to SALT. It would require only that this aspect of arms control be considered during talks in which defensive and offensive weapons are considered together.

Trifonov then returned to his view that US ABM attitudes were colored by domestic political aspirations. Leadingly, Trifonov suggested that some of the opposition to ABM might have been drowned recently in a distant Massachusetts pool. An interesting view was then presented of the Presidential Race of 1972 as seen through Soviet eyes.

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